

How to Get a Job Using a Network - associations, Xing and similar facilities

Students searching for jobs towards the end of their studies often look on job sites, in career magazines or on the job boards at their universities. However, those who also know how to use a network in their job search can benefit greatly.

Before exploring Xing, associations and similar facilities in greater detail, it is important to clarify a few basic principles of the (professional) network. Networking can and should be fun, and new contacts should not always be "rated" on their importance straight away. However, as we are discussing how to use networks to gain a more successful career, it is very helpful to have a systematic approach:

1. **Set goals:** firstly, decide what you really want! Where would you like to work? In small to medium-sized companies or in a corporate group? For a start-up or in an administrative role? In Berlin or Bielefeld? Or maybe in the country? **You don't have to answer everything straight away, but it is important to think about these things.**
2. **Analyse your current situation:** how well are you already networked? Do you already use Xing/LinkedIn? How many contacts do you have there? With whom do you interact on Facebook? Who else could you include? Your professor? Your training supervisor? Your mentor?
3. **Make an assessment:** which of your contacts could be relevant for you professionally? Categorise these under A, B and C. A contacts being more important to you professionally than C contacts. You should network more intensively with those contacts who are especially relevant professionally.
4. **Develop a strategy:** which 2nd- and 3rd-degree contacts could you still approach? 2nd- and 3rd-degree contacts are those whom you do not know directly but with whom you are connected via one or more persons.
Would this work over the internet or should you look for an occasion such as a conference or a workshop?
Your strategy should also include how you wish to be seen. **On online job networks such as Xing and LinkedIn, your profile should reflect where you see yourself in approximately two years' time.** So: if you are currently entering the job market, your profile should reflect the position you are aiming for of junior manager. You can achieve this for example through your photo and through the keywords you choose under "I offer" and "I am looking for".
5. **Planning tip #1:** determine which resources are available to you and how much time you can spare for networks. Half an hour to an hour per day is preferable. Of course, it also depends on the urgency of your job search.
6. **Planning tip #2:** make the most of opportunities such as conferences, fairs and also informal lunches in order to get into conversation with people.

7. **Get straight to the point:** be specific about your request: do you want a job recommendation, feedback on your CV or a reference? Then say so! And make sure you stick to your allotted time: if you ask for half an hour, stick to it.
8. **Allow for a "no":** just because you ask, doesn't mean you'll get. Always accept it when someone cannot or will not help you. You'll be surprised how often you get a "yes!"
9. **Show your appreciation:** when someone supports you, show your appreciation. Be grateful for the other person's involvement. However, you are of course entitled to go your own way and not heed every piece of advice.
10. **Be willing to help, too:** you will probably find this quite easy: just as you've been helped, offer your know-how or a reference to the next line of job seekers.



Now to be specific: online job networks, taking Xing as an example

We are now talking specifically about Xing. Some of the settings on LinkedIn are different but the basic procedure is similar.

1. A Premium account

A free profile is sufficient to start with. It allows you to become familiar with the basic features and get started. However, for those who want to build a professional network, a Premium account is advised. This allows you to see who has visited your profile, and you can even send messages and search for specific people using the "advanced search".

Tip: if you are searching for example for alumni of your subject at your university/college who now work for a specific company, you can only do this with the "advanced search".

2. A professional photo

Make sure you add a profile picture. As a student or graduate, you would be well to use the photo from your most recent internship application so that it suits the professional context. If you have a professional photo, you should definitely use it in your online profiles too. Before you do this, clarify the rights of use with the photographer.

3. Complete and sensible address details

Xing allows you to adjust your settings to determine exactly how much of your profile someone can see and what is visible for all members. You can even decide how much information you want to share with each individual contact. Business contact details should be shared as many people also use Xing as an address book. There should be an informative statement next to your profile picture, such as:

Graduate in Mechanical Engineering (B.Sc.), University of Duisburg-Essen
Energy Management

4. Profile details: the CV

In your Xing profile details, you can describe your training route and professional positions in detail. Recruiters from companies and personnel consultants primarily use Xing to search for potential candidates. A detailed and complete profile is an enormous help. So, describe each position with the relevant information: how big is/was the company? What are/were your responsibilities? Make sure you give the company's website!

Tip: if someone uses your information to send you generic questions or acts in an unprofessional manner, block the contact. However, you should still read through the questions thoroughly!

Crucial: keywords

Work with keywords. You can use variations, so alongside "mechanical engineer" also write "Maschinenbau-Ingenieur", "Diplom-Maschinenbau-Ingenieur_in" and "mechanical engineering diploma". This allows you also to be found by companies who don't yet use sophisticated methods such as Boolean searching.

These are the most important elements of creating a Xing profile. A Xing profile also offers further possibilities, which are especially important if you are studying a humanities subject, for example.

5. I offer, I am looking for...

The two headings "I offer" and "I am looking for" are a great opportunity for you to describe yourself and your motivation. Under the heading "I offer", your keywords should be repeated. Xing also offers suggestions whilst you are entering keywords. Under "I am looking for", show what is important to you: *job offer from a small to medium-sized company in southern Germany, trainee programme with an international corporate group in the financial sector etc.*

6. Portfolio

This is your opportunity to present yourself and your work. For example, those who wish to work in the field of PR/communications can upload work samples here, add quotations and use images.

7. Status updates

By updating your status, you can keep your contacts informed about your latest news, such as a new article that you have published or a new blog entry. You can also post news relating to your thesis – only that which you are allowed to make public, of course.

Tip: many people use quotations here. If doing so, make sure you observe copyright law. Even if you only quote one line of a song, you are still infringing copyright law and could be cautioned; also mentioning someone's name isn't helpful. There should always be relevance behind quotations that you use.



8. Other online profiles

Xing allows you to integrate more of your profiles. These include social media platforms, blogs, other websites etc. Some services can even be added via a feed and so are kept constantly up to date. This is sensible primarily as Xing has a good reputation with search engines and so ensures that your profiles are more easily found online.

9. Be contactable

Make yourself contactable either via Xing messages or by entering a telephone number or email address in the contact field. Check your Xing messages regularly or set up forwarding to your email address. This is important, as offers that are three months old are of little use to you.

10. Legal notice

Now onto an important topic that should not be underestimated. Those who use Xing for business purposes should also add a legal notice for security; as Xing is namely a business network, practically all users are obliged to provide a legal notice.

What must a legal notice contain?

- Name and address and details of how you can be contacted quickly and directly (telephone number/email), see *Telemediengesetz § 5 Allgemeine Informationspflichten* (German Telemedia Act (TMG) Section 5: General Information Requirements)

Xing or LinkedIn is more a representation of your (job) network. The actual networking process can then function both online and face to face. For example, when you meet someone new, you can network with him/her afterwards using Xing. Alternatively, Xing also makes suggestions of people you might be interested in.



Networking in "real life": organisations, associations and companies

At the end of the day, networking is always about people - and people like to get to know each other personally. To assist your professional networking, it can be wise to get involved in an association or organisation etc. even during your studies. However, you should have a very clear idea of how much time and energy you are prepared and able to give. A management position will definitely give you more visibility but will also entail a lot of work. The choice of network also plays a role. You need to think about your goals again here. For example, if you work or wish to work in a small to medium-sized company, events organised by the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IHK) or other chambers can be a good choice. Those who wish to distinguish themselves professionally are better to choose a professional association. For the time after your studies, there is of course always the alumni club of your alma mater.

Here is a list of networks:

- University/college alumni clubs, student organisations, scholarship/fellowship programmes
- Trade and professional associations, e.g. VDI (Association of German Engineers), dib (German Association of Women Engineers), GI (German Informatics Society), DJB (German Federation of Journalists/German Women Lawyers Association etc.)
- Cross-industry service clubs e.g. Lions Club and Rotary; there are also clubs purely for women such as Zonta, Soroptimist and Ladies Circle
- General professional women's networks e.g. BPW (Business and Professional Women), EWMD (European Women's Management Development), DMW (Digital Media Women)
- Professional networks with a specific perspective, e.g.: parents: vbm (Working Mums' Association) and vube (Association to Support Working Parents), Professional Association for Migrants, Völklinger Kreis (Professional Association of Gay Managers), Wirtschaftsweiber (Association of Lesbian Entrepreneurs and Managers), Professional Association of Disabled Workers
- Even during your studies, you can get involved in a range of organisations which form the basis of a very good professional network, for example ELSA for lawyers, Formula Student Germany (interdisciplinary with a focus on the automotive industry), bonding, konaktiva Darmstadt/Dortmund and many other initiatives that organise job fairs. There are also organisations such as AEGEE (European Students' Forum) and AIESEC which help to organise placements abroad.
- There are services offered by companies such as E-fellows, Careerloft and Talentpools. These often make a selection and include only certain companies; nevertheless, they can be interesting for networking.

Recommended reading and websites:

Tips for creating a profile on LinkedIn: [*Weblink linkedin*](#)

Michael Rajiv Shah: **Karrierebeschleunigung mit LinkedIn (Accelerating Your Career with LinkedIn)**. Stark Publishing, 2014. ISBN 978-3-86668-972-5. €6.95. This little book has it all. As well as LinkedIn, Shah also explains many of the features of Xing.

Ute Blindert: **Per Netzwerk zum Job. Insider zeigen, wie du deine Träume verwirklichen kannst. (How to Get a Job Using a Network. Insiders show how you can realise your dreams.)** Campus Publishing, 2015. ISBN 978-3-593-50220-5. €17.99.